

# SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP



# COVID-19 COLLECTING PROJECT FINAL REPORT

APRIL 2023

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Begun in February 2020, the Science Museum Group's COVID-19 Collecting Project is the largest ever undertaken by SMG. Involving close working between all SMG museums, we aimed to provide a permanent record for future generations of medical, scientific, industrial, cultural and personal responses to the pandemic and chronicle its impact on society.

The project consulted with other organisations to agree an [ethical framework](#) for our work. A formal Advisory Panel was established, consisting of scientists, academics and other experts. We quickly identified six specific collecting strands – public health messaging, assessment and testing, industrial development, treatment and care, scientific research, and culture and society – to ensure we collected a balance of material across different sectors.

As of March 2023, 913 objects have been approved by Collecting Board. Of those, 769 objects are fully catalogued and publicly accessible online. Future COVID-19 or pandemic collecting will now become part of SMG's ongoing contemporary science collecting programme.



## INJECTING HOPE EXHIBITION

Key objects from the Collecting Project went on display in the Science Museum's *Medicine: The Wellcome Galleries* in May 2021. The exhibit focuses on communication, testing, vaccination, and healthcare inequities highlighted by the pandemic. On a much larger scale was the temporary exhibition that opened in November 2022. *Injecting Hope* explores the science behind the creation of COVID-19 vaccines and showcases over 100 items from the collecting project.

Opening at the Science Museum, the exhibition will later transfer to the Science and Industry Museum in Manchester, where content will be adapted to emphasise relevance for the local community. The exhibition will then move to National Museums Scotland and a further venue. *Injecting Hope* was the result of an international collaboration with the National Council of Science Museums, India, and the Guangdong Science Center in China. The counterpart exhibitions opened in India in November 2022 and in China in January 2023 (delayed due to local COVID-19 restrictions).

Objects featured in the UK exhibition include the handwritten notebooks of Kate Bingham, Chair of the Vaccine Taskforce, a laptop belonging to vaccine scientist Tess Lambe and maps used by the military and NHS England to plot the vaccine rollout.

COVER: Lectern signs used in the televised pressing conferences from 10 Downing Street, London, during the pandemic © The Board of Trustees of the Science Museum

ABOVE: Margaret Keenan's first Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine material © The Board of Trustees of the Science Museum

# HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE COVID-19 COLLECTING PROJECT

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## **PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGING**

- The lectern signage used by the British Prime Minister during his announcements
  - The Prime Minister's Letter to the Nation (in English and Welsh)
  - Signage from public places including parks, supermarkets, places of worship and health centres, in different languages reflecting our diverse population
  - AA road signs directing the public to vaccine centres
  - Local and national leaflets and flyers, mainly collected by SMG staff
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## **ASSESSMENT AND TESTING**

- Material from the Cambridge COVID-19 Testing Lab – one of the first 12 labs set up in the United Kingdom to process tests
  - Material from Liverpool, the first city to trial mass testing for people with no COVID symptoms using lateral flow tests
  - Material from Lighthouse Labs, the government network set up to carry out testing
  - Technology such as the SAMBA II, which was developed for swift testing used in the field
  - Large collection of individual test kits, showing different iterations of design and use
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## **INDUSTRY**

- 45 digital photographs of railways in northern England taken during the first lockdown by Craig Scott, a guard on Northern Rail. His photographs show trains and stations all but deserted, emphasising the impact of COVID on the railway network.
  - Signage from major supermarkets showing the impact on customers and staff
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## **TREATMENT AND CARE**

- NHS Nightingale Northwest (hospital bed and life-support equipment) and NHS Nightingale London (extensive archival material)
- The Caribbean and African Health Network donated one of their health packs that was sent throughout Manchester
- The Bromley-By-Bow healthcare centre donated art and activity kits distributed to its users, including information in both English and Bangladeshi
- UCL's CPAP (Continuous positive airway pressure) devices
- Personal Protective Equipment, including the Virustatic Shield – developed with the University of Manchester – which uses a protein-based anti-viral coating
- Packaging for 20ml of RoActemra®, tocilizumab, used for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis which formed part of the REMAP-CAP trial to find treatments for COVID-19, and was found to cut death risks and reduced the need for transfer to intensive care

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## SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

- The Oxford Vaccine Group donated objects including the chair used by volunteers during the first trials and the fridge used to store the first vaccine samples. Personal items were also donated including Sarah Gilbert's mug, Keep Calm and Develop Vaccines.
- Several 'first' vaccine vials, including the first Oxford/AstraZeneca and BioNTech/Pfizer vaccines used outside a trial and the first vaccine administered at the Science Museum's own Vaccination Centre
- Material from the Human Challenge Trials at Imperial College, and the ATACCC and INSTINCT and REACT projects also run by Imperial
- Technology such as the MinION Nanopore (used for sequencing DNA and RNA)
- Personal copies of papers from the Head of SPI-M Secretariat and Scientific COVID-19 Modelling
- Maps from NHS HQ relating to the vaccine roll out programme

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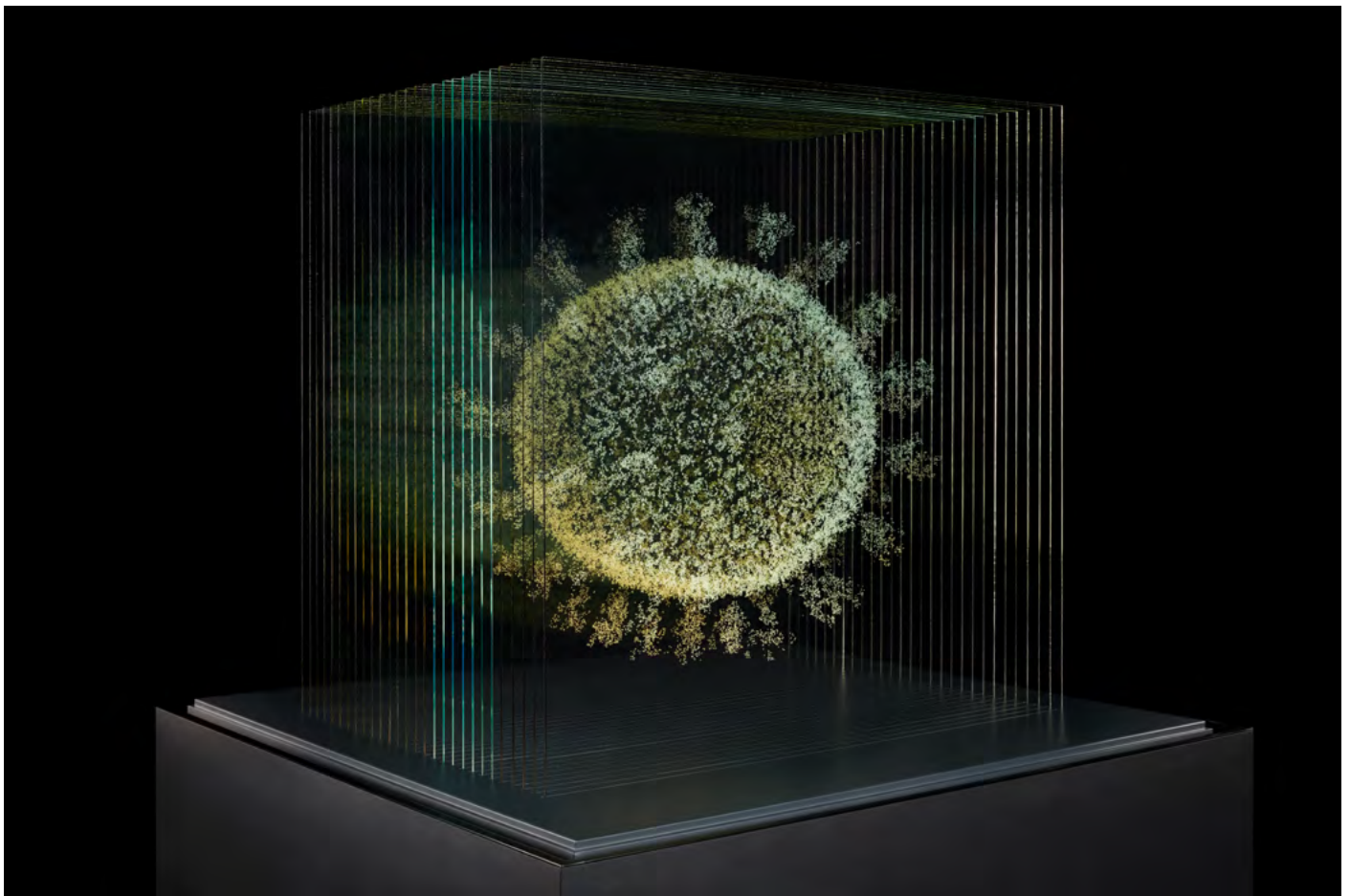
## CULTURE AND SOCIETY

- The impact on care home residents is captured with the acquisition of a 'cuddle curtain' made from a marine sail, allowing people to hug safely without direct contact
- A pair of wooden spoons that were used to bang on saucepans to thank the NHS
- Items relating to loss including Hexham Abbey *On Angels Wings* installation
- Hospital scrubs sewn by volunteer groups
- Research notebooks and associated objects relating to a study on loneliness carried out on (and by) university students during the pandemic
- A poster designed for Greater Anglia railway by 12-year-old Ella Young, as a thank you to key workers
- A homemade cinema, designed to sit over a laptop to create the illusion of being in a cinema during lockdown
- Homemade artworks such as rainbow signs and craftworks
- Ephemera, including Christmas cards and other personal items

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## ART

- Roxana Halls' portrait of mortuary manager Katie Tomkins
- Grayson Perry's vase, *Alan Measles – God In the Time of COVID-19*
- Angela Palmer's artwork, *2020: the Sphere that Changed the World*, showing the coronavirus modelled in glass sheets



## SUMMARY OF PRESS COVERAGE

Overall, there have been 154 pieces of coverage so far (excluding the press coverage of the exhibition *Injecting Hope*) with a mixture of national, international, print, online and broadcast outlets covering the collecting project. Key coverage included ITV News, BBC London and BBC News, The Times, The Daily Telegraph and the New York Times.

## THE FUTURE FOR COVID-19 COLLECTING

Although the COVID-19 Collecting Project is ending, collecting the pandemic will continue. Rather than a distinct project, collecting around COVID-19 will form part of the Science Museum Group's usual activities in collecting contemporary science. Priorities going forward are to continue accessioning objects already identified into the museum collection, move forward with online access, and facilitate research and public access to the material acquired so far.

# APPENDIX I

## NUMBERS OF COVID-19 COLLECTING PROJECT (BY COLLECTING STRAND)

COLLECTING STRAND	NUMBER OF OBJECTS ACCESSIONED	NUMBER OF OBJECTS AWAITING ACCESSIONING	NUMBER OF OBJECTS CATALOGUED TO ENHANCED STATUS	NUMBER OF OBJECTS PHOTOGRAPHED	NUMBER OF OBJECTS ON SITE BUT PRE-COLLECTING BOARD
<b>PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGING</b> Including local, national, and international	44 from 18 sources (SCM)	1 from 1 source (SCM)	45 (SCM)	5 (SCM)	99 from 10 sources (SCM)
<b>ASSESSMENT AND TESTING</b>	215 from 16 sources (SCM)	2 from 1 source (SCM)	214 (SCM)	16 (SCM)	15 from 1 source (SCM)
<b>INDUSTRY</b> Rail network, essential retailers, creative industries	19 from 5 sources (SCM) 12 from 3 sources (SIM)	0 (SCM) 2 from 1 source (SIM) 7 and 10 auxiliary from 4 sources (NRM)	14 (SCM) 9 (SIM)	0 (SCM) 9 (SIM)	6 from 3 sources (SCM)
<b>TREATMENT AND CARE</b> Hospital system, new Nightingale hospitals, impact to medical services, care homes, grief	116 from 15 sources (SCM) 21 from 1 source (SIM)	7 from 2 sources (SCM) 1 from 1 source (SIM)	116 (SCM)	31 (SCM)	19 from 7 sources (SCM)
<b>SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH</b> Vaccines, genetics research, tracking studies	220 from 25 sources (SCM) 1 from 1 source (SIM)	107 from 5 sources (SCM)	91 (SCM) 1 (SIM)	60 (SCM)	60 from 9 sources (SCM)
<b>CULTURE AND SOCIETY</b> Cultural institutions, personal impacts, societal impacts and responses	208 from 59 sources (SCM) 4 from 3 sources (SIM) 1 from 1 source (NSMM)	19 from 5 sources (SCM)	204 (SCM)	50 (SCM) 4 (SIM)	47 from 7 sources (SCM)
<b>ART</b> Originally a sub-section of culture and society	52 works from 16 artists (SCM)	0 (SCM)	52 (SCM)	49 (SCM)	15 from 3 sources (SCM)
<b>SCIENCE MUSEUM HISTORY</b>					15 from 5 sources (SCM)

## APPENDIX II

### TOTAL NUMBERS OF COVID-19 COLLECTING PROJECT TO 31 MARCH 2023 (BY SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP MUSEUMS)

	NUMBER OF OBJECTS ACCESSIONED	NUMBER OF OBJECTS AWAITING ACCESSIONING	NUMBER OF OBJECTS CATALOGUED TO ENHANCED LEVEL	NUMBER OF OBJECTS PHOTOGRAPHED
SCIENCE MUSEUM, MEDICINE	822	136	682	162
SCIENCE MUSEUM, ART	52 works from 16 artists	0	52	49
SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY MUSEUM, MANCHESTER	48	3	35	14
NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM, YORK	0	7 (and 10 auxiliary)	0	0
NATIONAL SCIENCE AND MEDIA MUSEUM, BRADFORD	1	0	0	0
TOTAL NUMBERS	913	146	769	225

Explanatory note on museum terminology used:

#### **Accessioned**

Formally entering the museum collection and being given a museum number. This is a legal agreement that means SMG commits to storing and caring for this object in perpetuity and it cannot be sold or otherwise disposed of (unless in very exceptional circumstances).

#### **Enhanced cataloguing**

The highest level of information added to the database which appears on the Science Museum Group's website.

**SCM** Science Museum, London

**NRM** National Railway Museum, York

**SIM** Science and Industry Museum, Manchester

**NSMM** National Science and Media Museum, Bradford